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Putting in a little roadwork



FRANKIE IKEMAN/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

The Reynolds family, from left, Natalie, Emma, Sam and Lily help paint the street mural at Canboro Rd. and Effingham St. at the community's Paint the Pavement event on Friday. See story and photos on page 3.



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UPFRONT

HEALTH

Lost to schizophrenia – and found

CHERYL CLOCK
Postmedia Network

One frigid winter night nearly 30 years ago, 24-year-old Bill MacPhee was fully dressed in his coat and tie and walked into oncoming traffic along Hwy. 3 in Fort Erie. A voice inside his head had told him to do it: *Bill, you have to prove yourself to God*, it said. And so he headed towards Ridgeway, mesmerized by the beautiful bright lights that seemed to swirl around him, unfazed by the noise of honking horns.

He felt special because God had spoken to him. He was chosen. And he didn't want to disappoint God.

At 24, a young man's naivete, MacPhee figured he had passed the test so he stepped back onto the sidewalk. He turned back towards Fort Erie and as he walked, he heard God again. He needed to prove himself another time. This time, he stripped off his clothing one piece at a time as he continued to walk towards an unknown destination, until he stopped, stark naked under the street light at Thompson Rd.

He looked up towards the light and muttered, "Beam me up."

He felt like a prophet.

When the police showed up, he thought they were Roman guards who were going to execute him. He was scared. But trusted that God would keep him safe.

MacPhee was admitted to the psychiatric ward at Greater Niagara General Hospital.

The next five years of his life were lost to schizophrenia.

MacPhee, 52, has been hospitalized six times. He's lived in three different group homes. And he's tried to kill himself with sleeping pills. He chronicles his journey with schizophrenia in his book *To Cry a Dry Tear* (Ultiverse, \$17.95).

His mother, Anne, hastled her son home with bipolar disorder. She is 84, and lives with MacPhee's 85-year-old father, Bill, at a nursing home in Fort Erie.

He believes it was a combination of genetics and stress that triggered his mental illness.

MacPhee had been living his dream, working as a commercial diver on an oil rig in the South China Sea. He was strong, successful. And had big plans in life.

In 1987, he got a woman pregnant. Scared and deeply ashamed, he kept it hidden from his friends and family. The secret wore on, and he was looking for forgiveness the day the group of Jehovah's Witness knocked on his door. He started to fixate on the Bible, waking up in the middle of the night to read verses. When he saw words float off the pages, he thought he possessed supernatural powers that God was sending him messages.

And as his descent into schizophrenia continued, he became paranoid on little sleep and experienced more and more illusions, delusions and paranoia.



Bill MacPhee, founder of SZ Magazine and author of *To Cry a Dry Tear*, a book about his journey of recovery with schizophrenia, in his Fort Erie office on May 4.

CHERYL CLOCK/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Faces appeared in the knots in wood paneling in his house. He would read the newspaper and think he had caused world events, like the war in Afghanistan. And the TV sent him personal messages through the captions at the bottom of the screen.

Eventually, the right cocktail of medication brought him back to reality.

But it wasn't the reality he wanted. He wanted his old

life back.

"I had lost my house, my job, my friends and my financial security," he says.

And he faced a new set of symptoms: a lack of joy, energy and hope. His days were bland and void of emotion, a truth reflect in the title of his book. When he felt like crying, he couldn't. There were only dry tears.

Medication had brought him back to the real world,

but his journey to recovery would take much longer.

It began when he signed up with a literacy organization in Fort Erie to improve his penmanship. A volunteer came to his home, and it gave him reason to wash and shave. Then he took a photography course at Niagara College. He found no satisfaction in the course, but did it anyway. He pushed himself again, and volunteered for a

BILL MACPHEE

To learn more about Bill MacPhee, visit his website at <http://billmacphee.ca> or <http://mentalwellnesstoday.com>

local organization. "I had a new social network of people who accepted me for who I was," he says.

Inspired by his friends to get involved in the writing world, he tried out many jobs with limited success. Then in 1994, he took a chance with his own company, Magpie Publishing Inc., and started producing *SZ Magazine* to draw attention to schizophrenia. He's since added *Anchor* magazine, to address depression, anxiety and bipolar disorder. He speaks across the country about stigma and mental illness. And he has created a recovery program based on his own lived experience.

And somewhere along the way, he found joy.

"I was making sense of something I'd gone through," he says.

"I found hope, faith, friends and a new purpose."

"That's exactly what people with mental illness need, a life. But they don't know how to get it back."

These days, he lives by his own definition of recovery: "When you wouldn't want to be anybody else other than who you are today."

cheryl.clock@summedia.ca

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Why are the Great Lakes great?

BRIAN BATY
For Postmedia Network

A few weeks ago, there was a public meeting in Niagara-on-the-Lake to update the public on the efforts to restore health to the Niagara River under the binational effort known as the Niagara River RAP (Remedial Action Plan). The presentations began with the title of this week's article and the enormity of the impact of the Great Lakes Basin is a starting point to appreciate before looking at the specifics of the Niagara River.

The Great Lakes are the largest freshwater system on earth, supplying 22% of global freshwater. More than 35 million people rely on the Great Lakes for drinking water. The Great Lakes are one of the largest regional economies, including a \$7 billion fishery and \$16 billion tourism industry. If the Great Lakes Region was a country, it

would be ranked fourth largest economy in the world — \$4627 billion dollars gross product. More than 170 species of fish and 3,500 species of plants and animals live in the Great Lakes Basin. If you could tag a drop of water at the top of Lake Superior, it would take 204 years to make its way to the Atlantic Ocean.

Needless to say, we are surrounded on three sides by the water of two of the Great Lakes with the Niagara River connecting the two. The Niagara River has been both a blessing and a curse. The hydroelectric power has been a blessing for both Canada and the USA with the Sir Adam Beck hydro project on our side of the river and the Robert Moses hydro project on the American side of the river. This abundance of relatively cheap power led to massive industrial development along the Niagara River, bringing with it significant environmental pollution. The extreme illustration of that occurred on the Cuyahoga River in Ohio on Lake

Erie when the river caught fire, spurring the environmental movement in the late 1960s. Closer to home, many may remember the controversy surrounding the remediation of the Love Canal. As far back as 1918 a report of the International Joint Commission declared the Niagara River as "the most degraded place in North America." The pollution below the falls is gross. Niagara River water is totally unfit for human consumption.

While the historical degradation of the Niagara River is known, the recent action that authorities on both sides of the border have developed remedial action plans to identify areas of concern (AOC) and this public forum provided highlights from officials on both sides of the border documenting the progress in eliminating sources of pollution and efforts to determine the sources of pollutants. In 1971, the Canada Ontario Agreement focused on reducing algae. In 1972, Canada and the USA signed

the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement and committed to addressing water quality concerns. By the 1970s, there were over 700 chemical plants, oil refineries etc. discharging over 250 million U.S. gallons of wastewater into the Niagara River each day. A 1978 agreement set the goal "to restore and maintain the chemical, physical and biological integrity of the waters of the Great Lakes." In 1987, that plan was revised to identify Areas of Concern (AOC) and governments committed to developing Remedial Action Plans (RAPS) for each AOC.

Celebrating the co-operation and water quality improvements the presenters at this forum forecast that the Niagara River would be delisted in 2020.

Brian Baty is a Niagara Regional Councillor for the Town of Pelham and a member of the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority (NPCA)
brian.baty@niagararegion.ca



Tecum Uman is shown in this undated Dave Freeman photo from the Harry Stott Collection.

HANDOUT/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

MARYANN RATCLIFFE

Shipwrecks – Carl Meentzen

SKIP GILLHAM
For Postmedia Network

While a small ship of only 89.07 metres in overall length by 13.05 metres at the beam, the West German freighter *Carl Meentzen* put in 15 years of trading before becoming the victim of a bizarre series of accidents.

The vessel had been built at Bremerhaven, Germany, and completed in April 1956. It could carry 3,450 tonnes of cargo in its two cargo holds. It made a brief appearance on the Great Lakes in 1962.

The ship was sold and renamed *Perija* for Venezuelan owners in 1969 and resided in 1970 becoming *Niki* under the flag of Greece. A collision and explosion in the English Channel on Jan. 11, 1971, sank the tanker

Texaco Caribbean with the loss of eight lives. The next day the *Brandenburg* struck the sunken tanker and it, too, went down with another 21 lives lost.

Later, on Feb. 27, 1971, *Niki*, on a voyage from France to Egypt with steel rails, hit one of these two wrecks and joined the duo on the bottom of the channel. Sadly, all 22 sailors aboard the *Niki* were lost, making a total of 51 sailors who perished.



■ NIAGARA REGION

Council wants more time to review budget ideas

ROB HOWLE
Postmedia Network

Niagara Region councillors deferred giving budget direction to staff Thursday, saying they did not have enough time to review a presentation.

Councillors received an advance copy from financial management and planning director Helen Chamberlain Tuesday afternoon. But some said that didn't give them enough time to review its contents before Thursday's budget review committee of the whole meeting.

"I think this is one of the

most important things that we are doing in a year," said Niagara Falls regional Coun. Bob Gale. "And for us to only spend less than 48 hours on it ..."

Gale, chair of the Niagara Region Police Services Board, said he spent all Thursday on board duties and "I have spent zero time on this report."

Post Colborne regional Coun. David Barrick, chair of the budget and finance committee, said he heard similar comments from other councillors and suggested Gale propose the report be received and any decision

on it be deferred to a meeting June 25.

That motion was unanimously passed.

While councillors made no decision on staff direction, the report asks councillors to endorse a budget draft that would result in a 3% (\$9 million) increase in spending. A forecasted 1% growth in assessment (from taxation on real property businesses) would offset that increase to the tune by 2%.

Niagara Region Chair Alan Cashta said he was hopeful the increase could be eliminated.

"It's still a request of mine

to find the taxpayers a way that we can conclude with a 0% tax levy increase, and what that would look like," he said.

"Are there areas you can suggest that we should be looking or could be looking to make that a reality?"

Chamberlain replied staff continue to look at ways to find savings.

"We will look at all service delivery options and consider the possibility of reshaping the way in which we deliver those services in an effort to provide savings," she said.

Chamberlain said 46%

(\$321 million) of the \$691 million gross levy budget comes from provincial taxes. The balance is derived from provincial funding for social services and benefits, user fees and provincial offences court fines.

Councillors want school boards to pay taxes on vacant properties

They really can't do much more than complain about it. And that's just what Niagara Region council opted to do Thursday night — complain about a plan under consideration by the Niagara Dis-

trict Catholic School Board to implement a development charge on all new construction in order to pay for new schools. Should the board go through with it, the Education Development Charge would tack on approximately \$180 to the cost of building a house. That dollar figure is based on land values in the two municipalities in which enrollment projections over the next 15 years show new schools will be needed in Pelham and Niagara Falls. The EDC would be collected in each municipality, whether the board plans to build a school there or not.

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PLANNING MEETING FOR A ZONING BY-LAW AND OFFICIAL PLAN AMENDMENT**PUBLIC MEETING NOTICE**

WHAT: 1.) Planning Meeting for a Zoning By-law Amendment (in accordance with Section 34 of the Planning Act, R.S.O. 1990, as amended);
 2.) Planning meeting for a separate, unrelated Official Plan Amendment (in accordance with Section 17 of the Planning Act, R.S.O. 1990, as amended).

WHEN: Monday, July 13, 2015 at 6:30 p.m.

WHERE: Town of Pelham Municipal Offices - Council Chambers
 (20 Pelham Town Square, Fonthill)

OWNER: Town of Pelham

FILE NO: AM-02-2015 and OP-AM-04-2015

Information**Notice #1: Zoning By-law Amendment, AM-02-2015 (MAP 1)**

A Town initiated application to amend Zoning By-law No. 1136 (1987) was received for the lands comprised of the Town of Pelham.

The applicant (Town) seeks approval to amend Zoning By-law No. 1136 (1987) to correct minor technical deficiencies and bring the Zoning By-law further into conformity with the Official Plan.

Notice #2: Official Plan Amendment, OP-AM-04-2015 (MAP 2)

A Town initiated application to amend the Official Plan was received for the lands comprising the Urban Living/Built Boundary Areas of Fenwick and Fonthill.

The Town seeks approval to amend the Official Plan to modify the policies for residential intensification and semi-detached, townhouse, multiple and apartment dwellings within the Urban Living/Built Boundary Areas of Fenwick and Fonthill, and to include new areas for potential intensification.

YOUR INPUT IS ENCOURAGED! WE ARE LISTENING!

Please provide input by speaking at the public meeting or by making a written submission to the Town of Pelham. To provide input in writing, or to request personal notice if the proposed amendment is adopted, please send a letter c/o Town Clerk, Nancy J. Bozzato, PO Box 400, 20 Pelham Town Square, Fonthill, Ontario, L0S 1E0.

Unless indicated otherwise, personal information and all comments will become part of the public record and may be publicly released.

NEED MORE INFORMATION? CONTACT US!

For more information, please contact Ms. Jodi Legros, Community Planning & Development Administrative Assistant, at 905-892-2607, ext. 321 or email at jlegros@pelham.ca. A copy of the Information Report regarding the proposed amendment, as well as any additional information regarding the application, may be obtained on the Town's website at pelham.ca/planning-meetings-notices or at the Community Planning and Development Department (2nd Floor) after 12:00 p.m. on Friday, July 10, 2015.

Legal Notice**IMPORTANT INFORMATION**

If a person or public body does not make oral submissions at a public meeting or make a written submission to the Town of Pelham before the proposed Official Plan Amendment is adopted, the person or public body is not entitled to appeal the decision of the Council of the Town of Pelham to the Ontario Municipal Board. If a person or public body does not make oral submission at a public meeting or make written submission to the Town of Pelham before the proposed Official Plan Amendment is adopted, the person or public body may not be added as a party to the hearing of an appeal before the Ontario Municipal Board, unless in the opinion of the Board, there is reasonable grounds to add the person or public body as a party. If you wish to be notified of the adoption of the proposed Official Plan Amendment, you must make a written request to the Clerk of the Town of Pelham and such request must include the name and address to which such notice should be sent.

Dated at the Town of Pelham, this 10th day of June, 2015. Nancy J. Bozzato, Town Clerk.

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NOTICE OF DECLARATION OF SURPLUS LANDS AND PROPOSED SALE**Notice****WHAT IS THIS?**

Pursuant to the Town of Pelham Sale of Real Property By-law #1942(1997), NOTICE is hereby given of the proposed sale of municipally owned lands.

Information**MORE INFORMATION**

At their regular meeting of June 1, 2015, Council of the Town of Pelham passed the following resolution, with regard to the lands shown on the accompanying plan:

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the lands known municipally as 792 Welland Road, Part Lot 2, Plan 16, Parts 1 and 2 on RP 59R-3703 be and are hereby declared surplus to the needs of the Town of Pelham; and

THAT said be and are hereby authorized to proceed with the sale of said lands in accordance with the Town of Pelham Procedures for the Sale of Real Property By-law.

The lands to be sold include the property and building formerly used as the Pelham Fire Station #2. As provided in By-law #1942[1997], a local real estate office shall be retained to conduct the sale, and any sale of the subject property shall be authorized by by-law.

**CONTACT US**

A copy of the preliminary plan may be viewed at the Office of the Clerk during normal office hours, Monday to Friday, 8:30 to 4:30 p.m.
 Nancy J. Bozzato, Town Clerk, P: 905 892-2607, ext. 315 E: NJBozzato@pelham.ca
 20 Pelham Town Square, P.O. Box 400, Fonthill, ON L0S 1E0.



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RECREATION PROGRAMS & CLASSES

Zumba Classes @ Pelham Arena

Tuesday, June 23	9:30 – 10:30 am
Tuesday, June 23	7:00 – 8:00 pm
Wednesday, June 24	7:30 – 8:30 pm
Thursday, June 25	10:00-11:00 am

Walking Club - Everyone is welcome! - June 23 & June 25
Interested in joining a Walking Club? Then join ours! Tuesdays at Pelham Arena from 9-10 am & Thursdays at Fonthill Bandshell from 9-10:30 am. For more info, contact (905) 892-2607 ext. 329.

wednesday july 1st

Pelham NIAGARA

CANADA DAY 2015

Take part in the FUN at HAROLD BLACK PARK

11:00 am: Rotary Club Children's Activities, tents open!
Food & Retail Vendors on site
Monster Murals at Park Entrance tents open!

1:00 pm: Grand Parade route A-E, Walk to Harold Black Park
Grand Opening Ceremonies & National Anthem
2:00 pm: Free Birthday Cake, while quantities last
3:00 pm: Ute music & entertainment in the tent tents 10:15pm!
3:30 pm: Knights of Columbus Soccer Challenge
4:00 pm: Postage Stamp Dedication & Special Show
4:30 pm: Postage Stamp Dedication & Special Show
7:00 pm: Fireworks
9:15 pm: Fireworks

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A Heritage Tea Party

Saturday, June 27th

Old Pelham Town Hall
491 Canboro Road, Ridgeville

Celebrate Heritage in Pelham!
Part of our 2015 Canada Day Celebrations

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Seating #1 11:30 a.m.
Seating #2 2:00 p.m.

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HOLIDAY

Canada Day celebrations set for Pelham

MARYANNIE FIRTH
Postmedia Network

National pride will be alive and well in Pelham on Canada Day.

The town, in partnership with several community groups, is hosting a birthday bash for the country that's sure to draw thousands of people to Harold Black Park July 1.

The free family-friendly event kicks off with a variety of children's activities hosted by Rotary Club of Fonthill at 11 a.m. The service organization is bringing along inflatables, an obstacle course and craft station, as well as a variety of games for youngsters to test their skills.

The town's grand parade gets underway at 1 p.m., travelling

from A.K. Wigg Public School, down Haist St. to the park, and is followed by opening ceremonies at 2 p.m.; birthday cake shortly after.

Live music and entertainment begins at 2:30 and will continue until fireworks conclude the evening at 10:15.

Welland and District Humane Society hosts a pet show at 2:30

p.m., the same time Knights of Columbus kicks off its soccer challenge.

Keeping with the theme of all things Canadian, the Fonthill Lions Club will host its second annual poutine eating contest at 4 p.m.

New this year, and expected to draw a young adult audience, is two performances, at 4:30 and 7 p.m., by Quebec-based Kruzin BMX Stunt Team.

"We've seen many young people participating at the scanner," Pelham's culture and community enhancement coordinator Jodi Hendriks said.

"We wanted to introduce an element from the park at the celebration."

The town will also host a celebration geared toward a more mature audience July 1 at Peace Park. Birthday cake will be served at 2:20 p.m., followed by live entertainment by Honest Frankie.

Along with assistance from local community groups, funding provided by the federal government helps make the celebrations possible, Hendriks said.

maryanne.firth@sunmedia.ca
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DAYS

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In this 2014 file photo, the crowd watches as the City of Thorold Marching Band performs during the Pelham Canada Day parade.

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■ **MADDIE HOOD:** Father, brother of slain St. Catharines woman take to road in her memory

'I'm riding with her in spirit'

BOB TYMCZYSZYN
Postmedia Network

It's a long journey ahead for Rob Hood and his son, Andrew, as they make their way across Canada in memory of their daughter and sister, who lost her life three years ago in St. Catharines.

The father and son team from Kamloops, B.C. dipped their front tire in the Arctic Ocean on June 17 and hope to make the roughly 6,000-kilometre journey from Vancouver to Halifax by Aug. 17.

Hood said he had it in mind that he might make this ride at some point with his daughter, Maddie.

"I'm not riding with Maddie physically any more, but I'm riding with her in spirit," he said.

"I'm going to share our story, how we're making a difference out of a terrible tragedy."

Maddie Hood was found dead July 7, 2012, after fire-fighters responded to a fire in the basement apartment she was renting in the south end.

Her killer was later sentenced to life with no parole for 12 years.



MADDIE HOOD

The murder has taken a toll on the family, and this ride is one way Rob Hood feels he can try to deal with the tragedy.

"I have this desire for her not to be forgotten," he said.

"A lot of the misfortune at the time is that all we want to do is what happened to the guy that did this. We will get publicity and be in the news for years to come."

"When your child is murdered, basically she is forgotten."

"As a dad, I'm using this (ride) to make something good of a terrible tragedy. I'm doing this to deal with some of my own issues than Maddie is still with me and I'm doing something in her name."

Before her death, Maddie was working part-time with St. Catharines and District United Way and planned to start classes at Brock University later that year.

In 2013, a fund in her name was started and the family used a portion of the money to support a young man to work part-time while going to school in St. Catharines.

"This last year, I initiated the Maddie Hood Fund West in Kamloops because it

was her second home," said Hood.

The second fund helped a summer student at the United Way of the Thompson-Nicola-Cariboo in B.C.

Hood feels the experience at the United Way in St. Catharines benefitted Maddie, she said she really thought she wanted to do this.

"There's lots of volunteer opportunities out there, but why shouldn't we as a social entity and a community co-fund or pay those people to have those work experiences," he said.

There is already enough money raised from this ride to allow him to co-fund a student again next year.

But he stressed fundraising isn't the primary goal.

"The ride has multiple interpretations, the spirit

of my daughter and what I thought she stood for and what she could have contributed to benefitting the community," Hood said.

He expects to go through St. Catharines in early July, when he and Andrew will embark on finishing the ride.

The 63-year-old admits he's never used social media in the past, but people can follow their journey on a Facebook page called Ridin' with Maddie.

"If people want to come and ride a couple of kilometres and support the positive memory of Maddie, that would be great," said Hood.

Maddie's mom, Colleen Hood, lives in Niagara and said she will be putting up the riders when they come to Rob and Andrew and I.

"This is something that



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want to ride a portion of the ride with him," she said.

"We've all had to try to make sense of what happened to a person who was so innocent in so many ways.

"Her loss was enormous to us."

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LOCAL NEWS

Dress up the garden with showy peonies

Stately, ruffled and as fancy as a party dress, garden peonies (*P. lactiflora*) are the stars of the show in the late spring border. Their arrival depends on the whims of Mother Nature. If May is warm, the peonies arrive early; if it is cool, they wait until June to don their frilly outskirts.

No matter when the bloom, rain showers seem to arrive just as the peonies come into full flower. The rain is my cue to grab the secateurs and treat myself to an handful of peonies. An old-fashioned pitcher decorated with pastel crepe roses, holds a bouquet of soft pink, sweetly scented Sarah Bernhardt peonies, slated for my desk at work. Another vase, a tall, cut-glass affair, brims with a mixed bouquet of Sarah Bernhardt (rose pink), Festiva Maxima (creamy white with red flecks) and a blend of unnamed creamy pink and magenta red double peonies, will grace the kitchen table. The gentle fragrance of rose-scented soup wafts through the air.

Garden peonies come in wide range of colours and forms. Flower colours include creamy white, soft pink, rose, magenta and deep red. The flowers can be single, semi-double or double. The single and semi-double varieties are more likely to stay upright on their own, the doubles tend to collapse when it rains — and it always rains when the double peonies are in bloom.

To support them, stakes and twine or peony rings to support the heavy flowers, or just treat yourself to abundant, guilt-free bouquets, when the stems start to sag. Peonies are more than a flash in the garden. Their glossy, dark green foliage sets off the showy flowers in the spring and later in the season. It becomes a handsome backdrop for annuals or herbaceous perennials such as catmint or hostas. Peony foliage colours up nicely in the autumn, adding warm shades of red and mahogany to the border.

Garden peonies are her-



**Theresa
Forte**

Green Thumb

baceous perennials. They die back to the ground after a heavy, killing frost, and spend the winter safely underground. Wine-red peony flowers appear in the spring when the daffodils and early tulips are in bloom. Peonies prefer deep, well-drained loam and full sun. They take several years to settle in, so be patient. I fell in love with a Festiva Maxima peony several years ago, and offered it a position of honour in the garden. It flowered that first year and then sat out the next two seasons. This year, the stars aligned and she's putting on a spectacular show — definitely worth the wait.

Good companions for peonies include perennial geraniums, cat mint and Lady's mantle which bloom at the same time and hold their colour for an extended period; they will often rebloom. Choose a companion plant that will echo the colour of the peony or provide an extended season of interest after the peony has finished blooming.

Peonies are quite sturdy and self-sufficient once established, but they are subject to botrytis blight. If you see black spots on the leaves or stems, cut the affected stems and destroy them (do not add them to the compost pile). Some references suggest treating the young foliage with a fungicidal spray, but in my experience, that is not usually necessary. I have enjoyed peonies in my border for more than 20 years. They were marked with black spots in some years, only to return the following year with clean foliage.

In the late autumn, cut the stems of garden peonies right back to the ground and dispose of the foliage, do not add the clippings to your compost bin. The foli-



Theresa M. Forte/SPECIAL TO POSTMEDIA NETWORK
A lush June bouquet featuring Sarah Bernhardt and Festiva Maxima peonies.

PROLONG THE SEASON

Extend the season with early, mid-season and late flowering peonies:

Early: Charles White (double white)

Early Mid-Saison: Festiva Maxima (double white with red edges)

Mid-Saison: Bowl of Beauty (deep pink with creamy yellow stamens)

Mid-Season/Late: Shirley Temple (white, blushed with soft pink)

Late: Sarah Bernhardt (rose pink, double)

gently shake them dry and arrange them in a vase.

Theresa Forte is a local garden writer, photographer and speaker. You can reach her by calling 905-351-7540 or by e-mail at theresa_forte@sympatico.ca.

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■ EDUCATION: New resource facility opens at Niagara College

Aboriginal centre a place for self-growth

KARENA WALTER
Postmedia Network

Niagara College's new aboriginal student resource centre is more than just a room.

It's a place to build community, says student Celeste Smith.

"This is part of that cultural awareness a lot of students don't have," said Smith, who explains the new room is a place for self-growth. "It's not just a place to sit and do your homework."

Niagara College celebrated the grand opening of the centre at its Niagara-on-the-Lake campus. The dedicated space for Indigenous students will be used for cultural programming, events, workshops and elder teachings.

But it's also a place to drop in and hang out, study, use the computers and check out the library for Indigenous resources.

The school had a similar centre at the Welland campus since 1992.

Suzanne Haudenosaunee, was determined to get a centre at the Niagara-on-the-Lake campus when she came to the school two years ago and joined the Aboriginal Education Management Circle to advocate for it.

The school had been trying to years to open a centre, but space at the Niagara-on-the-Lake campus was at a premium.

"I'm so happy to see it before I graduate," said Smith, who graduates June 16 and has plans to go Brock and then law school for aboriginal law.

She said students have been com-

ing into the centre since it unofficially opened in March.

"This is it. This is reconciliation. This is what we need. This is what we want."

Niagara College has 180 aboriginal students that have identified them-selves.

"Many are far from home, so it's important for them to feel connected," said Donna Gerher, manager of First Nations, Metis and Inuit student services.

She said they can connect with each other and with different services in the community, like the friendship centres.

"We can better support them," she said. "It's key to retention and helping them graduate."

Rick Anderson, acting vice-president student and external relations, said the space will not only support students, but is a launching point to share other world views.

He expects international students and others will learn from it as well.

Anderson, of Six Nations of Grand River, said the timing for the grand opening was great with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report released this week. Everything that's happened because of residential schools is huge, he said. Opening a room seems small in scope, but it's those small things that make a difference.

"It creates a dialogue and an awareness," he said.

The celebration included an open-

ing prayer and blessing of the centre by Aboriginal elder Stephen Paquette, eagle feather presentations and an honour song by potential student Joe Shawana.

It capped off with Niagara College president Dan Patterson signing the Indigenous Education Protocol for Colleges and Institutes. The protocol, launched in December 2014,

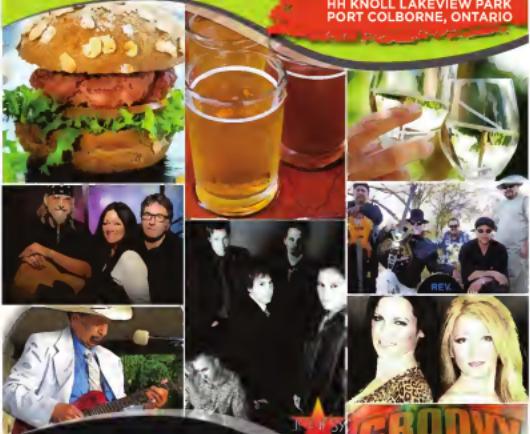
provides a vision of how colleges and institutes can strive to improve their practices and better serve Indigenous Peoples.

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Cats, kittens keep local animal shelters busy

MARYANNE FIRTH
Postmedia Network

It's not uncommon to see pregnant cats being brought through the doors of local humane societies, especially this time of year.

Cat overpopulation has become an issue throughout Niagara and it can be seen in the pregnant cats, nursing mothers and unwanted kittens frequently turned up to the animal care organizations.

The local shelters, as well as community groups focused on animal issues, are working toward addressing the problem by helping to make spay and neuter surgeries more affordable and accessible to pet owners.

"Our shelter is always at capacity for cats," said Tammy Gaboury, animal care manager for Welland and District Humane Society.

"And now, we're at the height of kitten season."

The Welland facility has had a wealth of cats brought in recently, several of them with a litter of kittens by their side.

In 2014, 885 kittens were cared for at the Welland shelter. "It's why we have the cat adoption centre, why we do adoption drives," Gaboury said of the sheer volume.

"There's not a municipality that we cover that doesn't have a cat overpopulation problem."

It's also part of the reason why the shelter opened the

Welland and District Regional Spay Neuter Clinic a little more than a year ago. The clinic provides low-cost surgeries not only to pets, but also to feral cats and rescues.

The population issue needs to be addressed at the ground level, Gaboury said, with unfixed cats roaming the streets targeted for spay and neuter surgeries.

She praised the work of local not-for-profit group Port Colborne Feline Initiative, which recently announced a new program, The Big Fix, that aims to see every cat in the lakeside city's East Village neighbourhood spayed or neutered at no cost.

"This is not something that's going to be fixed overnight,

but it's a start," Gaboury said, adding that the end goal will be reached faster with groups working together.

PCFI's initiative was also lauded by Lincoln County Humane Society executive director Kevin Shoshan.

"We certainly applaud a program like that, because it's needed," he said.

"There are just not enough people out there spaying and neutering their cats."

Shoshan believes the key to controlling the cat population is making the necessary surgeries more affordable and accessible.

That's why the St. Catharines shelter opened its own low-cost spay and neuter clinic in December 2012. It has since

PELHAM NEWS ■ THURSDAY, JUNE 18, 2015

performed more than 10,000 surgeries.

Since November 2013, the shelter has also subsidized its adoption rates, lowering the cost to \$25 in order to encourage adoption of spayed and neutered cats. That shelter sees about 2,000 cats a year.

"It's an expensive program to run," Shoshan said, estimating it costs about \$84,000 annually.

But it's one he feels is also assisting with the overpopulation problem seen in the Garde City.

Robby Voyce believes the public is beginning to get the message that spaying and neutering is the responsible thing to do.

But the assistant manager of Port Colborne SPCA said overpopulation remains a problem in the town.

The shelter currently has in its care four cats nursing a total 18 kittens.

Most, but not all, pregnant or nursing cats that come into the shelter do so as strays, Voyce said.

Two of the four cats currently at the shelter were owner surrendered.

Sometimes an unfixed cat gets out of the house, gets pregnant and then its owner is left feeling "overwhelmed" and unsure of what to do, Voyce said.

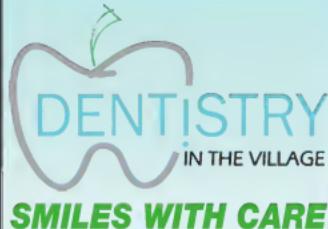
"One cat then turns into seven cats," who then end up at the shelter, she said.

"If people were to spay or neuter their pets, they wouldn't run into these problems if they were to get out. That's why public education is so important."

Voyce urged people to contact their local shelter to learn more about low-cost spay neuter options available in their area.

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By Dr. Chakib Hammoud, M.H., Ph.D.

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RED NOSE/CHEEKS ROSACEA

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Welland-made short film featured in festival

ALLAN BENNER
Postmedia Network

It was February 2014 — two months after the holidays ended — but Curtis

Harrison's childhood home on Bare Ave. in Welland was all decked out for Christmas.

Harrison was trying to emulate the Christmases he remembered as a child in the 1980s, and he did his best to ensure the decorations added to his parents' home were as gaudy as possible.

A *Christmas Story*, a movie partly filmed in St. Catharines, about a boy named Ralphie and his quest for the ultimate Christ mass present, a Red Ryder BB gun, was among Harrison's favorite scenes.

While that movie was set in the 1940s, Harrison wanted to make a similar movie based on his own childhood memories growing up in Welland, four decades later.

"I wanted to create kind of a 1980s version of that," he said. "I wanted to put a lot of Canadians in it, and make a film about what it was like when we were growing up in the '80s, especially in Welland."

With funding from the Foundation to Assist Canadian Talent, Harrison, 36, who has since gone on to a successful career in the film industry in Califor-

nia, returned to his parent's home that winter to film a 10-minute episode of *The Day Santa Didn't Come*.

Harrison's hometown will soon have an opportunity to see the fruits of his efforts.

The movie, starring Toronto-born Jack Fulton as Curtis as a child, is being included in the 2015 Niagara Integrated Film Festival.

It will be playing at the Landmark Cinemas at the Pen Centre, June 20 at noon, as one of seven films created by Niagara area filmmakers last year for the Niagara River Shorts program.

Harrison is overjoyed to know his work will be playing for local audiences.

"It's come full circle. It feels amazing not only to have the community be such a part of making the film, but also be able to watch it as well," Harrison said in an interview from Los Angeles, where he was filming a television commercial.

"The entire process was wonderful, from shooting in Welland at my parents' house and then being able to bring it back and show it. It's an amazing experience."

Harrison said his family has already had an opportunity to see the film when it premiered in Toronto.

"They were of course over the moon about it. They were super excited," he said.

Harrison said he's now in the early stages of creating a full length version of the movie, which will include a few more parallels to the classic movie that inspired him.

But instead of a Red Ryder BB gun, Harrison said the must-have toy in his movie is a "Yeti Sasquatch 2000."

"It's the toy of the year, and his mom is going to get it for him," he said.

Harrison said he hopes to start filming that movie in northern Ontario next February, once he can obtain remaining necessary funding.

He said fellow Canadian actor and director Jason Priestley, best known as Brandon from the *Beverly Hills 90210* television series, has agreed to direct the film.

Tickets for the NIFF short films are \$12.50 each, or \$10 for seniors, and can be purchased at niagarafilmfest.com or by calling 1-800-656-7800.

alan.benner@summedia.ca

■ EDUCATION

Board backs budget with no job cuts

DON FRASER
Postmedia Network

Special education funding continues to influence District School Board of Niagara budgeting.

Last Tuesday night, trustees approved a \$432-million budget for 2015-16.

The balanced plan includes no teaching jobs deemed redundant, and the hiring of two full-time educators.

The board also says provincially driven revenue pressures will force it to continue to consider closing or merging smaller, underused schools.

Although provincial funding for its special education services is in the second year of a four-year phased-in increase, the board still spends more in that area than is provided in grants.

DSBN still managed to cut its special education deficit by about \$1 million and plans to eliminate it in two years.

"I don't think a lot of boards across Ontario are in the same position we're in," said trustee Kevin Maves, chair of the DSBN finance committee. "We're in an enviable position ... we have a balanced budget and no staff layoffs, no redundancies, and we're actually hiring staff."

"We're also putting money back into things: the senior staff taught us how important our students are."

Maves added that to balance the budget, \$3.73 million had to be taken from the board's accumulated surplus.

That leaves a balance of \$8.83 million in DSBN's general operating accumulated surplus ledger.

"We're one of the few boards that actually has those types of surpluses to draw on," he said. The budget must still be approved by the provincial Education Ministry.

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■ EDUCATION

Union says 34 Niagara Catholic layoff notices issued

DON FRASER
Postmedia Network

Educational support staff at Niagara's English Catholic board recently received 34 layoff notices, the union representing them says.

Karen Infantino, president of Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 1317, said notices were sent to 26 educational assistants and eight child-and-youth workers.

There have also been several reductions of hours notifications.

Infantino said the reduction in hours translates into the equivalent loss of four or more secretaries and five or more library technicians at the Niagara Catholic District School Board.

However, Niagara Catholic District School Board education director John Crocco said those numbers are in flux as final enrollment numbers for September aren't known.

The board's change daily and staffing is in flux," he said. "Sept. 8 is a long way from now."

Infantino said while the board points to overall declining enrollment and a resulting loss of provincial funding, that doesn't mean a decline in students with special needs. She said library services are also important component of education and should be increased.

She wondered why there hasn't been any reduction in senior administration to cover the shortfall.

"And secretarial support, which leads to keeping students safe, does that necessarily even need to be reduced?"

Infantino said four English as a second language (ESL) instructors were laid off in December 2014, for this current school year. Crocco said there has been a decline in enrolment in continuing education and for ESL services.

"I would like the board to not balance the budget on the backs of the educational support workers who work directly with students," said Infantino.

Crocco stressed that the next few students will be met in the recently-approved 2015-16 budget.

"The board approved a budget that was based on the needs for students in providing programs and services for all of our students for 2015/16," he said. "We will meet those needs."

"If a student needs an educational assistant, they will be provided with an educational assistant. If there is a need for a child-and-youth worker, the student will be provided with a child-and-youth worker."

He said the level of school supports in areas like secretaries and library technicians "will go

up and down depending on the enrolment of that school."

Crocco said designated early childhood educators are also going to be hired, though the exact number isn't yet known.

He said in the past, staff redundancies have often been conducted through attrition. The board has already filled resignations or retirements at the Catholic Education Centre board office for more than a year.

"We are facing a declining enrolment, and corresponding reduction in funding," he said. "We have closed a number of schools in the past number of years, we have tried our best to manage the situation with the least amount of impact for students and staff."

Crocco stressed that the union collective agreement are also being fully complied with.

"We're not going to negotiate through the media," Crocco said.

Earlier this week, Crocco said teaching redundancies are now at 8.5 positions.

The CUPE local plans to conduct a peaceful demonstration outside the Catholic Education Centre in Welland on Tuesday, before the 6 p.m. Niagara Catholic board meeting.

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■ ENBRIDGE RIDE: Two-day Niagara-Toronto event collects \$19 million

Cyclists raise millions for cancer hospital

DON FRASER
Postmedia Network

Elina Mayberry hit the saddle this weekend remembering her late dad, "cancer can be beaten."

She first signed up for the 200-km Enbridge Ride for Cancer in 2008 for the physical challenge. In recent years, she also bikes as a salute to her mother, who's recently turned 80.

Five years ago, her mom lost her bladder to cancer. After treatment at Niagara Falls, she is now among cancer's many survivors.

"That cancer came back twice, and the third time it came back they said... surgery is all we have left to do," said Mayberry, 53. "And now she's still here, which is great."

Over the weekend, she joined Team Triano Law, composed of Mayberry, Paul Ellis and Lori Elder of St. Catharines, who raised \$7,637 for the cause.

That contribution was among more than \$19 million pledged for this year's two-day Toronto-Niagara Falls ride to benefit Toronto's Princess Margaret Cancer Centre.

Both cities served as start and finish lines in different routes for the 4,863 riders.

It was tough going for Mayberry, who endured mechanical problems with her bicycle and some heavy rain toward the end.

"There were bike mechanical issues (issues), we were sitting there, it was raining, but it was warm... even in the worse days, there are things way worse."

"The sun's out now and it's a beautiful day," she said at the Falls finish line about at 3:45 p.m. Sunday.

In eight years, the Enbridge Ride to Conquer Cancer has raised more than \$138 million for the Princess Margaret Cancer Foundation and more than \$281 million for cancer



RON SORRELL PHOTOGRAPH/SPECIAL TO POSTMEDIA NETWORK

At the start/finish line in Niagara Falls for Enbridge Ride for Cancer.

research, treatment, education and care programs across the country.

Money raised supports personalized cancer treatment at Princess Margaret, which

is described as the highest standard in cancer care.

While Elina's mom was

never treated at Princess Margaret, "we never forget that center benefits everybody in

Niagara," said Mayberry, who works for Brock University's international services.

"It's in their high level of research, the scale they're doing it at, and the people there who help all of us," she said.

"It's one of the top five cancer centres in the world."

Meanwhile on her riding team, Ellis is also a brain-tumour survivor of eight years.

"He's still here and still doing the ride," said Mayberry. "Last year he got a (cancer survivor) tattoo around the bloopie dent in his skull."

Enbridge has been the title sponsor of the Ride to Conquer Cancer since 2011. Collectively more than 1,700 Enbridge employees, families and supporters have raised more than \$5.7 million for the ride across Canada.

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4:30PM ADVANTAGEOUS	9:30PM TESTAMENT OF YOUTH
6:30PM CHILDISH FAILURE OF THE MODERN RELATIONSHIP WORLD PREMIERE	10:00PM LIZA THE FOX FAIRY CANADIAN PREMIERE
SATURDAY JUNE 20	
LANDMARK CINEMAS (PEN CENTRE)	
12:00PM NIAGARA RISES SHORTS	SENeca QUEEN THEATRE
12:30PM THE LOST AVATOR	1:00PM THE AMAZING WPLA
3:00PM CANADA'S NOT SHORT ON VILENT	4:00PM THE OVERNIGHT
3:30PM FOR GREAT IS WHAT WE WAIT	7:00PM UNEXPECTED
6:00PM SENSE AND SENSIBILITY CANADIAN PREMIERE	10:00PM THE QUIET HOUR CANADIAN PREMIERE
6:30PM SENIOR HERMAN F***ING PERFECT CANADIAN PREMIERE	
9:00PM THE FALLING	
9:30PM THE DURY OF A TEENAGE GIRL CANADIAN PREMIERE	
SUNDAY JUNE 21	
LANDMARK CINEMAS (PEN CENTRE)	
10:00AM POSTHUMOUS	SENeca QUEEN THEATRE
10:30AM THE LOST AVATOR	1:00PM HOW TO CHANGE THE WORLD
12:30PM LOST IN YONKON CANADIAN PREMIERE	1:00PM STATION 13 CANADIAN PREMIERE
1:00PM THE DURY OF A TEENAGE GIRL	4:00PM KATHLEEN CARROLL IN CONVERSATION: NETWORK
3:30PM FISHCAKED CANADIAN PREMIERE	8:00PM PEOPLE, PLACES, THINGS
4:00PM I'LL SEE YOU IN MY DREAMS	
6:00PM BEST OF ENEMIES	
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■ COMMUNITY

Now being gay in Niagara 'is not a big thing'

DON FRASER

Postmedia Network

A decade ago, this gathering of tolerance might have been unthinkable.

Ted Mouradian joined a lively neighbourhood baby shower in St. Catharines recently. It was thrown for a male couple who'd just adopted a girl.

"The whole mixed street got together and it was a great time," said Mouradian, with some wonderment.

Mouradian says it's important to realize homosexuality itself was illegal in Canada until 1969, when it was decriminalized.

The expectation for young men then was an automatic marriage with kids.

You kept your mouth shut if you were gay. You walked the straight line.

"I was an athlete, a jock, and had no concept about what I really liked," he said. "It all evolved from there."

That questioning led to a tough decision to end his marriage in the late 1980s. Mouradian and his ex-wife remain good friends.

"And that's definitely a good thing," said the father of two and grandfather of two.

In those years, the gay/bisexual/bisexual/trans Niagara social scene was typically centered in one or more St. Catharines central Montebello Park.

"When I was in my teens, there was simply no good information — all I knew about gays was those 'effeminate men.' Now I'm realizing they are (just one part) of what the whole community is."

—

Mouradian's new life chapter began at a Carlton St. gay bar called Gusto.

"It was hopping, it was an amazing community then," said the relationship management consultant. "We put on plays and shows and people mixed together, the men and women, the drag queens and jocks."

"There was a baseball team and a group that raised money for charities ... back then there were more people in the closet, or felt unsafe, and we were right."

Now a gathering of lesbians and bisexuals might happen without incident in any restaurant in Niagara, says Mouradian.

Meanwhile, with younger generations, social contact is frequently found online or through informal networks.

And a once-controversial Gay Pride celebration has grown to be widely attended, and holds events in venues like St. Catharines' central Montebello Park.

Mouradian points to accept-

tional security and the comfort of strength in numbers for a frequently assaulted minority.

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Mouradian points to accept-

THE INSPIRATION FOR GAY PRIDE EVENTS

In June 1969, New York City's Stonewall Inn, a gay drag queen bar, was raided by police. Patrons were abused and arrested.

Burgars and their supporters became fed up, and rebelled violently. Soon, Greenwich Village residents rallied behind the protesters in what became known as the Stonewall Riots.

"It was essentially the first time guys said, 'We have no right to treat us like this, we are human, and we are who we are,'" said Ted Mouradian, a St. Catharines resident who has been active in the local gay community.

"This was really the beginning of the gay rights movement in North America."

"It's become our own emancipation day of celebration."

time guys said, "We have no right to treat us like this, we are human, and we are who we are," said Ted Mouradian, a St. Catharines resident who has been active in the local gay community.

"This was really the beginning of the gay rights movement in North America."

"It's become our own emancipation day of celebration."

minimize the struggle certain people in certain families may go through, as some people just don't accept it."

"And I think there are still pockets of resistance due to family beliefs and ethnicity. But it's not as bad as it was."

He suggests the socialization shift has come from acceptance, and possibly more online relationships.

—

"I can have a birthday party with gay men now in any restaurant and no one blinks an eye," said Mouradian.

—

"Before ... the only place to do that was at the gay bar," he said.

—

"Now being gay in Niagara is not a big deal. I don't want to

wrestle with the same-sex date issue, there it was smooth sailing."

"Adam showed up with his date, the teachers hugged him, people high-fived him," she said. "He never had homophobia ... he was just that cool, all-around funny guy, the class clown."

Adam, she said, was also able to "travel through multiple circles in the school, so he was well liked. His being gay didn't even enter into it."

As for his experience at McMaster University after graduation: "No issues whatsoever," Palios said.

Her other son, Stefan, went to Yale University in New Haven, Conn. There, it was a different story.

"He didn't come out until midway through university," she said. "And it was a struggle for him, because he was an athlete. So it was all very masculine ... the athletic community weren't cheerleaders for him, or his peers being gay."

Meanwhile in Niagara, Palios is a strong advocate for the Grimsby School's Positive Spaces group.

She said the terminology now is including "lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, two-spirited and queer or questioning sexuality."

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Gale 'not pleased' with cop discipline

ROB HOULE
Postmedia Network

Bob Gale is not happy about the level of discipline handed to a Niagara Regional Police officer.

When contacted last Wednesday, the regional councillor from Niagara Falls, who is also the Ni-

agara Regional Police services board chair-

man, said he was not speaking on behalf of the board, but "I'm not pleased with what I've read."

Gale was referring to a Postmedia Network article about an NRP's disciplinary trial, which he did not attend.

Parker was docked 120 hours pay for an incident that took place while he was off-duty on Nov. 18, 2013. Parker attempted to arrest a motorist he believed to have been driving dangerously. As he did so, witnesses reported he yelled profanities at the driver, who feared for his safety at the hands of the larger Parker, and remained in his car despite orders to get out.

An agreed statement of facts said Parker tried to pull the man from the car, but the driver was restrained by a seatbelt. Before returning to his car under the advice of another police officer who was with Parker, he allegedly struck the chest of a bystander who he ordered off the scene.

In February, Parker pleaded guilty under the Police Services Act to discreditable conduct and to two counts of using unnecessary force. On Tuesday, hearing tribunal officer Supt. Scott McLean docked Parker 120 hours' pay, which could come from banked time, vacation time, overtime or be worked at no pay.

Parker refused comment while outside police headquarters on James St. following the hearing.

Tuesday marked the fourth time Parker received a dock in pay for Police Services Act offences. In October 2012, he was docked 60 hours' pay after pleading guilty to discreditable conduct. In January, his own investigation after his commanding officer was cleared of wrongdoing concerning an allegation that he failed to file the proper paperwork after having drawn his weapon.

In July 2011, Parker was docked 90 hours' pay after being found guilty of using unnecessary force while arresting a cyclist without legal cause.

In November 2007, he was docked one month's pay after being found guilty of misconduct for pepper-spraying a prisoner who was handcuffed and restrained in the backseat of a cruiser.

Gale said Wednesday he has questions related to discipline for police Chief Jeff McGuire.

"Like is there any criteria applied in determining whether to use in-house or external hearing officers? What's the training provided to the hearing officer? Questions like that," Gale said. "What training is provided to the prosecutors? These are the types of questions I want to ask the chief."

Since it falls under operations, the board has no say how discipline is handled, Gale said, but that does not mean board members cannot ask questions.

"The board has an obligation to review the chief's administration of the complaint system and this is how we can review it," Gale said. "But the chief runs the complaint system."

Posing questions may serve to enlighten the public, he said.

Niagara Region Police Association president Cliff Priest takes exception to Gale commenting on police discipline issue.

"Mr. Gale shouldn't be commenting on ... it's not in his purview to be commenting on police discipline," Priest said. "That's not within the [police services board's] area to make comments."

Priest said since Gale chairs the police services board, it's not possible for him to recuse himself from a position when speaking on police matters.

"You would never accept Cliff Priest speaking as himself. I'd speak as the president of the NRPA ... it's like the chief saying, I'm not speaking as the chief, I'm just going to take my uniform off. As soon as you see his name, every one says that's the chief."

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Marineland facing its own mortality with Senate bill

As far as big fights go, it put Mayweather vs. Pacquiao to shame.

Not only did it live up to the hype, not only were big blows landed, it set the stage for an even better sequel.

No, not Jurassic World. This was Marineland vs. The Senate.

One senator, actually, Liberal Wilfriord Moore of Nova Scotia, finally tabled his private-member's bill last Thursday aiming to ban the breeding, acquisition and live captures of cetaceans across Canada.

That would be whales, dolphins and porpoises. Basically everything that puts the "marine" in Marineland.

Moore was supposed to introduce his bill Monday, but the Senate adjourned before he could do so with the bill — something about spending expenses. They had their own house to clean up before taking aim at someone else's.



JOHN
LAW

Moore was joined in Ottawa Thursday by Green Party Leader Elizabeth May, Canadian Federation of Humane Societies CEO Barbara Cawcett, and former Marineland trainer Phil Demers — whose decision to speak out against the park three years ago kickstarted this whole chain of events.

Facing a \$1.5-million lawsuit from Marineland, last Thursday's announcement meant the most to Demers. He took the original risk, prompting others to speak out ... and receive lawsuits of their own (Marineland has been demonstrating its animals and says it has passed all government inspections).

Even the date was sym-

bolic — it was three years to the day he decided to take his former employer to task. "Prior to that, I was apprehensive to speak to the media," he told me last Thursday morning. "On this very morning three years ago, I said, 'You put my name and face across (everything)'! Splatter it, I don't care. I've got to do something for those animals."

Carrington stirred the pot further by calling the capture, confinement and breeding of marine mammals "archaic" and that "there are better ways for us to learn about and conserve species."

Moore then threw a haymaker, saying many Canadians find whales and dolphins in captivity "unacceptable." It's an ethical issue that engages our collective consciences.

These are all things activists and protesters have been saying for years, but now they were being said on a national stage. With

big stakes involved. This bill, as it stands, would put a permanent dark cloud over the only two facilities affected — Marineland and the Vancouver Aquarium. As their animals die, they wouldn't be replaced. It would be a prolonged goodbye until, finally, the pool were empty.

But then Moore said something odd. On the phone after our conference, he told me if people want to see whales in their natural habitat "you can come to Nova Scotia and go whale watching."

Hmmmm.

Marineland must have picked up the same vibe, because when they finally released a statement at 4 p.m., they blasted the bill as a "bi-coastal job creation and tourism bill at the expense of Ontario." They accused Carrington of "west coast May of eliminating competition and promoting tourism for their own constituencies."

"It is clear Senator Moore

and Ms. May are focused on tourism and know little about the whales they express so much concern about."

It was interesting watching the strategies at play here. Moore, Demers and Carrington stressed the cruelty of captivity. Marineland emphasized potential job losses.

The most revealing part of Marineland's statement is near the end, where the flat out lie begins: "We would forgo the 'immediate closure' of all marine-mammal facilities. While not technically true — the parks could remain open with the animals they have, while they last — it was meant to send a chill through Niagara Falls."

It shows how serious things have gotten. Through every protest, every press release, even the passing of Bill 80 last month, which banned the breeding and acquisition of killer whales in Ontario, I've never heard Marineland drop this bombshell. Question whether it can continue.

After 54 years in operation, it is facing its own mortality.

Mind you, this bill has a long way to go. Last Thursday was just Phase 1 of 6, as it must go through three readings at the Senate, then another three at the House of Commons. It will face heavy opposition at every step, much of it encouraged by Martinland and the Vancouver Aquarium.

But you wonder if something inevitable is entering its final stages. And whether Niagara Falls is ready for a future without Marineland.

During my stroll through the park last summer, I was struck by all the construction going on. Bulldozers and tractors in the distance, preparing the ground for future additions. Park owner John Hoier won't say what's going in there.

After Thursday, you have to wonder if they'll ever have tenants.

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